Legislative Committee Visits

During the legislative session, the UMBI President and Center Directors visit the committees responsible for overseeing the UMBI state appropriated budget. But this time the committee came to UMBI, when MBC hosted the Health and Government Operations Committee from the Maryland House of Delegates. Representing UMBI was Dr. Claude Nash who introduced a pre-recorded welcome from UMBI President Dr. Jennie Hunter-Cevera and gave a brief overview of UMBI. Then MBC Director Dr. W. Jonathan Lederer gave an overview of MBC and also his research on heart failure and arrhythmias.

Three MBC faculty members also discussed their research. Dr. Mervyn Monteiro talked about neurodegenerative diseases. Dr. Chris Geddes reviewed his work on fluorescence applications in biosensing. The last faculty member was Les Baillie, who talked about the biodefense initiative at MBC and his work on anthrax.

The Center of Advanced Research in Biotechnology’s director, Dr. Edward Eisenstien, also spoke briefly about what was going on in the Rockville facility.

The committee members asked numerous questions which made them slightly late for the next stop on their tour but the overall feeling was that they were very impressed with what was going on at the MBC and in UMBI. It certainly was a pleasure to host such a distinguished group.

Health and Government Operations Committee Members from left to right in front: The Honorable Peter A. Hammen (Chairman); The Honorable Marilyn R. Goldwater; The Honorable Dan K. Morhaim; The Honorable Veronica Turner; The Honorable Adrienne A. Mandel; The Honorable Shirley Nathan-Pulliam; The Honorable William J. Frank; The Honorable Wade Koch. Visitors also included legislative aides and analysts.
UMBI in conjunction with Frostburg State and West Virginia University has established the Appalachian Center for Ethnobotanical Studies (ACES). The center is dedicated to investigating the potential of native plants that have traditionally been used as herbal medicines. Along with education and conservation efforts, the center hopes to increase the economic benefit that the managed development of useful botanical resources can bring to Appalachian region. ACES was funded with the help of Maryland’s US Senators, Paul Sarbanes and Barbara Mikulski.

Mr. David Bobbitt has been hired as UMBI’s Development Officer. He will be overseeing the fund-raising efforts for both UMBI and all the centers. MBC is looking forward to working with Mr. Bobbitt, who has a solid track record in raising funds.

UMBI’s Human Resources has launched an initiative to give staff and faculty an opportunity to improve their computer skills, explore business topics or learn new programs. Check out the extensive catalogue at http://www.umbi.umd.edu/hr/e-learning/index.html. Certification credits are available in some areas.

Odds and Ends

*September 1, 2006* The Program in Cancer Biology headed by Dr. Shengyun Fang and the Institute for Neurodegenerative Diseases, headed by Mervyn Monteiro, co-hosted a seminar by Dr. Yihong Ye from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases entitled “The Mechanism of Retro-translocation from the Endoplasmic Reticulum.”

*September 8, 2006* Dr. Chris Geddes officially launched a new journal called *Plasmonics*. The journal will be dedicated to the bourjeoning area of plasmon research.

*October 11, 2006* The UMBI President, Center Directors, and VP Retreat was held at Turf Valley Conference Center and Resort in Ellicott City. This off-campus event is held approximately twice a year and allows UMBI leaders to look at long term plans and institutional wide issues.
Fraunhofer USA visits MBC

On September 19, MBC hosted another outside group interested in learning more about the MBC and UMBI. Senior representatives from Fraunhofer USA, Inc. and its parent organization, Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft from Germany, listened to MBC Directory W. Jonathan Lederer discuss the diverse research interests of MBC faculty. Dr. Frank Robb of the Center of Marine Biotechnology, Dr. David Pauzza from the Institute of Human Virology and UMBI’s Education and Outreach Assistant Director, Mr. Gary Coleman, also gave presentations.

Fraunhofer was visiting to explore possible collaborations in both research and education. The company specializes in contract research both in the US and Germany, through research centers and associated institutes. While nothing specific was initiated, both sides have a greater awareness of the potential benefits of cooperation, should an area of mutual interest be discovered. It also raises MBC’s profile in the business side of biotechnology.

The group also toured the UMBI Shady Grove campus.

MBC’s John Collins Honored

Dr. Jennie Hunter-Cevera presented MBC’s Dr. John Collins with a plaque recognizing his dedication and efforts in the name of shared governance. Dr. Collins is past chair of UMBI’s Faculty Staff Senate, serving from April 1993 to September 1996 and February 2002 to September 2003. He then became Acting Chair until the end of October, when Mervyn Monteiro was officially appointed (see previous page).

In addition to his stints as senate chair, Dr. Collins is UMBI’s representative to CUSF (Council of University System Faculty) and secretary of CUSF.

Dr. Collins is a past recipient of the USM Elkins Professorship (Inside MBC, vol. 4, No. 3). Outside of work, Dr. Collins is an avid runner.
MBC Happenings

Comings and Goings

Dr. Julio Altamirano has joined Dr. W.J. Lederer’s laboratory as a Research Associate. Dr. Vadim Salnikov has returned to Russia after collaborating with Drs. Valeriy Lukyanenko and Ilya Baskakov.

Grants and Contracts

Dr. Mervyn Monteiro, 9/1/2005, NIH, “Functional Studies of Calmyrin,” $304,425, yr 1 of 5. This was a competitive renewal of an earlier grant.


Publications


One More Time!

The MBC is again advertising for an tenure-track Assistant Professor. With an early start, it is hoped that a viable candidate will be identified by spring. Tim Hughes is coordinating the effort again, but it is the Recruitment Committee who must go through every application. The committee is trying a new approach this time. Instead of waiting until the application deadline is reached, the first batch of applications will be reviewed and candidates identified and invited, while more applications are organized and reviewed. The first candidates are expected to be invited to give a seminar before the end of the year, with more invitations issued in January.


Muriel JM, Dong C, Hutter H, Vogel BE. Fibulin-1C and Fibulin-1D splice variants have distinct functions and assemble in a hemicentin-dependent manner. DEVELOPMENT 132 (19): 4223-4234 OCT 2005.


Talks and Travels


Dr. Ilia Baskakov, Invited Speaker, “Mammalian Prion Protein — Hierarchical Self-assembly and Substructure of Amyloid Fibrils,” Department of Chemistry, Cambridge University, September 12, 2005.

Dr. W. Jonathan Lederer Invited Speaker, “Turning the Ca²⁺ ‘Overload,’” Department of Physiology, University of Maryland Baltimore, October 6, 2005.
